Antonio Maria GENTILI

THE BARNABITES

Manual of history and spirituality
of the Order of Clerics Regular
of St. Paul Beheaded

Chapter 2

SAINT ANTHONY MARY ZACCARIA
& origin of the three Pauline Institutes

Cremona was founded by the Gauls of Brennus, a Roman colony, which became a fortress when Vitellius and Otho fought it for the Empire. It was destroyed under the Byzantines of Ravenna, and the Longobards of Agilulf and Theodelinda, to be then changed from a presidium of Barbarossa to the first seat of the Pontida conspirators. It became a town competing with surrounding cities, and fell under various local tyrants or patrons; a Fortress of the Ghibellines against Milan, until Bianca Maria Visconti married Francesco Sforza bringing the two cities together into the 1500's.

Cremona has always been described in history in a position of continuous self-defense (1499 under Venice; 1509 under the Sforza of Milan; 1525-1702 under Charles V and Spain): located on the road to Milan, the ramparts of the Castle of Santa Croce could still be seen today. The city spread between the great fortress of the Castle of Santa Croce and the little one of Borgo Santo Spirito across the Po River, with a mixture of humble houses of merchants and army personnel, and noble palaces. Many were the towers and bell-towers around the main one, called "Il Torrazzo" (1250).

The Zaccaria Family

It was in one of these palaces, at the beginning of 1502 that a baby boy was born, who at the baptismal fount of St. Donato's parish church, was called Anthony Mary. Lazzaro, his father, was from the Zaccaria noble family, perhaps descending from a Genoese family (probably 1090 from Cyprus) with the same name, which had possessed many feuds and realms in Levante, then had moved to Cremona back in the 1300's. The noble seal was a golden lily on a red background: the emblem which had decorated the togas of many Zaccarias who had served in the administration of the city, as well as in the most prestigious position as chancellor of the Sforzas.

His mother too, Antonia Pescaroli, belonged to the noble family which had given the name to the little city of Pescarolo, where they owned houses and lands. The two families had already become related in the previous century, when, in 1428, Niccolò Zaccaria married Filippina Pescaroli.

The Zaccaria lived at the end of what today is Via Beltrami, in a palace separated from the church of St. Vitale by the public road. It was a patriarchal family: the head of the household was Bernardo with his wife Elisabetta Pasquali, their two sons Lazzaro and Pasquale with the respective wives Antonia Pescaroli and Apollonia Roncadelli, with the grandchildren Anthony Mary, Lazzaro's son, Bernardo, Pasquale's son, and Venturina, Lazzaro's natural daughter, born to him before his marriage to Antonia. They managed a nourishing business of wool materials, and the shop, located in Piazza Duomo, facing the city hall, was properly called "Drapperie" (pieces of cloth). Close to the shop they also had a warehouse so large that in various documents it was called a palace.

The health of the Zaccaria family was not the greatest. The head of the Household, Bernardo, died relatively young, before the beginning of the century, and his son Pasquale will inherit the name. Only few weeks after the birth of Anthony Mary, death struck again in January 1503, taking our Saint's father, Lazzaro, only 27 years of age. One year later, in 1504, will be Pasquale's turn. And so only women and children were left in the house: a mother-in-law, with two daughters-in-law, and three grandchildren.

Geneology

Bernardo Zaccaria (+before 1477)
& Elisabetta Pasquali

Margarita

Lazzaro (1474 +1504)
& Antonia Pescaroli

Giovanna
& Giovanni del Pesce

Pasquale
& Apollonia Roncadelli

Venturina
(natural daughter)
1st G. B. Beati
2nd Amedeo Operandi

St. Anthony Mary

Bernardo
& Cecilia del Suzzo, 1540

Antonio Ma. Antonia (Angelic) Apollonia Cesare

The fact that both Antonia Pescaroli, a widow at 18, and Apollonia Roncadelli did not remarry, in favor of living together with the family, tells us a lot about the cohesion and

harmony in the Zaccaria household, besides the strong human and Christian character of the members. Hit by these tragedies the three women at first rented out the shop with the warehouse, then they sold it, but their family unity was not broken. Only in 1528, before his priestly ordination, did Anthony Mary decide to divide with his cousin Bernardo the family property, kept intact up to then: 1600 perches of land, plus the cash.

It is in this environment, tried by wars, that Anthony Mary grew up. He himself was frail and pale the whole of his life. It is said that a frail complexion makes more attractive the beauty of a child, and more evident his intelligence; the Angelic Sister Paolantonia Sfondrati, who got to know him for a year when she was a young girl, wrote about him: "Everyone who got to know him as a child testified about his certain supernatural grace, noticeable at the outside too, with which the Lord had enriched him." The education received from his mother brought to completion the work of grace.

In the following years, Anthony Mary did not show the absence of the paternal component in his education: his writings and his actions show the qualities of a determined and overpowering leader. This means that his education was not only realistic, but also profoundly balanced and fundamentally serene, in spite of everything.

The childhood and adolescence

We know very little about his youth: only the episode of the cloak donated to a poor man, numb because of the cold, which was reported for the first time by Father Gabuzio, first historian of the Congregation, who had heard it from the lips of eyewitnesses. We know little also about his studies. In the division of goods with his cousin Bernardo, he reserved for himself, "the books on Humanities, of Greek, of Latin, of Philosophy, and of Theology," therefore, we can deduce that these books belonged to him, and that as a teen he had studied at home Humanities with Greek and Latin, before getting involved with the superior studies of Philosophy-Medicine at first, and then Theology. We know about his knowledge of Greek from the Greek invocation to the Crucified Lord (JC+XC) found at the beginning of each one of his writings, including the meaningful variant discovered recently in one of his letters of November 13, 1538, in the library of Guastalla.

Instead we have a very good knowledge of the terrible situation of the city of Cremona, which, because of its castle, was hit by waves of foreign troops. The nobility of the city had to assist impotent to what the contemporaries called "the extreme unction of the motherland."

Unruly troops used to room around freely through the streets, forcing their entry at arm point in the homes, stealing anything they could find. It was a blessing if the Religious authorities were able to spare the city from the plague of the sack, which was the easy way for foreign captains to pay off their poorly paid troupes. In the narration of the entry of the "salvage and unconquerable Helvetic soldiers," the chronicles report with an angry irony how the people of Cremona had to provide food for them: "they had to set along the streets, tables with wine, cheese, bread, salads, and omelets; and the Helvetics left after feeding themselves with all those Cremonese goods!" Usually with the war the troops would bring along pestilence in the city.

So this is the background of the childhood and teen years of Anthony Mary Zaccaria. If what Bossuet wrote is true: "*Life is an empty page until what I have suffered is written on it*," we can say that the sufferings experienced in his family and in his city helped a lot to bring to maturity this silent and pensive teenager, who, at the threshold of his youth, was facing the challenge of his future.

At the University of Padua

For any eighteen-year-old it would be natural to be caught by the spirit of adventure as he leaves for the University in a famous city like Padua, not far away from the famous Venice, so rich with history and art. I believe that he would be very busy preparing his suitcases, also keeping an eye on his packet. In 1520, having decided to become a medical doctor for the "honor of his family," Anthony Mary did exactly the opposite. With a deed by the notary public Gerolamo Salandi, on October 5, he wrote his will in favor of his cousin Bernardo, leaving the use-fruit in favor of his mother Antonia Pescaroli for the whole of her life; and on the 16th of the same month, always with the same notary public, he made "an irrevocable and *inter vivos* donation of all his goods in favor of his mother, there present and accepting on her behalf and on behalf of her heirs." In the deed there are some amazing clauses, for example the donation could not be revoked "for whatever ingratitude that could take place, nor for any other reason, including the birth of his own children," a clause which, Anthony Mary says, he has "pondered well and fully." It is true that he reserved for himself one hundred imperial liras, but it was required by law for validity, since it seemed inadmissible a total and immediate self stripping of everything.

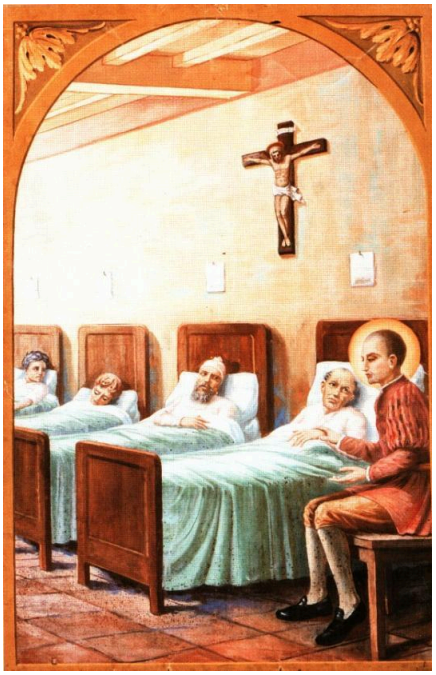
It was a strange way of preparing himself for the University. We would not have believed the biographers if the State Archive of Cremona had not preserved the authentic original document. And so Anthony Mary, aboard a boat on the Po River, together with a companion, left Cremona for Padua.

Venice was proud of its University, but did not want it on the Laguna. Padua was close enough and easy to control, with all the advantages and no draw backs, especially after Luther's Reformation, which was adding more reasons to the classic dissensions among students. Students were considered a public liability, and the authorities purposely were ignoring them to avoid a rebellion leading to a mass evacuation. After all the University of Padua came to be through a students' secession from the University of Bologna.

At the end of the war of Cambrai, Padua's University had reopened its doors, and the students were already about a thousand, divided into two groups: the jurists for Law, and the artists for Medicine, which then was mostly based on Philosophy. The chairs of Medicine were: two ordinary and two extraordinary for Theoretic Medicine, two ordinary and two extraordinary for Practical Medicine; two for "*Res Herbaria*," two as commentary to Avicenna, two of Surgery. This last one often was a trouble maker with the ecclesiastical authorities because the students kept stealing corpses for experiments.

The scholastic year started on October 18, feast of St. Lucy: after the Mass in the Cathedral and the inaugural speech, the "artists" would go to the church of Santa Giustina to offer homage to St. Luke, evangelist and medical doctor. The next day the lessons would start with a full and pressing schedule: every chair had two teachers, one in competition with the other, so that emulation would be an incentive for better results. The length of every lesson was one hour. Vacation days, except when important people were passing by, were very few; ten days at Christmas, fifteen days at Carnival time, ten at Easter, eight at the Ascension; then classes up to the Assumption, August 15.

We know the names of the probable teachers of Anthony Mary from the roster of 1520 and 1524. For sure we can say he followed the courses of Marcantonio Zimarra, well known for the title "*A barbarian Averroist*" given to him by Bembo, but also because he edited the works on natural philosophy by St. Albert the Great, of Averroës, of John of Jandun, and many other medieval philosophers. His major work was published in Frankfurt one century after his death. He



took notice of Anthony Mary Zaccaria and must have invited him to cooperate with him to put together a great collection of sayings by Aristotle and Averrohe, published under the tile "*Tabula cum delucidationibus in dictis Aristotilis et Avorrois*." Anthony Mary started the work, but he did not finish it: the note book will later be used to write his Sermons; but the few sentences kept in it are found in the work of his master.

Not much more is known about his life in Padua. It would be interesting to know the exact day of his graduation, but unfortunately the registry of 1524, due to the laziness of the notary public, is still all in white, with few loosed notes here and there to remind himself of what to write. But we have another important document, the registration at the "*College of Physical Doctors*" in Cremona, whose members, according to the Statutes, had to be noblemen with a graduate degree. Anyway as soon as he went back to Cremona, he had plenty of work, because of the pestilence which hit the city in the summer of that year. The biographers speak of the Zaccaria palace transformed into a Lazaretto but we do not have any document to confirm it. But it would be unbelievable that Anthony Mary, in a moment of such great need when there were so few doctors, would not do all that he could for the victims, he who few years before had given his cloak to a poor man! Indeed his assistance to the people must have been extraordinary if his compatriots honored him with the titles "father of the city" and "an angel in the flesh."

Back to Cremona - first apostolate

His mother forced upon him the responsibility of administering the family goods: this is why we find him often with his cousin Bernardo in the notary deeds for sales, for purchases, for exchanges, for locations, etc., and also to accept the heredity left to him by a paternal aunt, Giovanna Zaccaria, widow of Giovanni del Pesce: perhaps this is what allowed him to be so generous with his alms toward the poor, as mentioned by his biographers.

1528 is crucial in the life of St. Anthony Mary Zaccaria: he abandons medicine opting for the priesthood. We do not know what was the precise motivation behind this decision, at a moment when the social needs of his land were so many and pressing, and, therefore, his activity as medical doctor would have been very much in need. Anyone who chooses opts for the best; and so, leaving to others the care of the social wounds of his times, he preferred to cure the spiritual wounds, which were no less severe than the social ones.

It seems that the monastery of St. Dominic, in Cremona, residence of Fra Marcello, his spiritual director, was the cradle that prepared him to the priesthood. The place was rich with culture, very much alive, where the problems of the Church were felt and lived intensely: just think that that year, the Prior, Fra Bartolomeo Mauri, left the Dominican Order to join the Protestant movement. In this context Anthony Mary felt vividly the urgency of the reform, so much urged by the Councils, but never realized in concrete, because it was felt in the high realms only; he understood the need to start from the grassroots, trying without exception anything possible: the One who died on the cross for His Church would take care of the rest.

Bible, Fathers of the Church, mysticism, prayer: these are the verifiable steps of his preparation toward the priesthood.

Dates of his ordination

From recent researches we know now that he received:

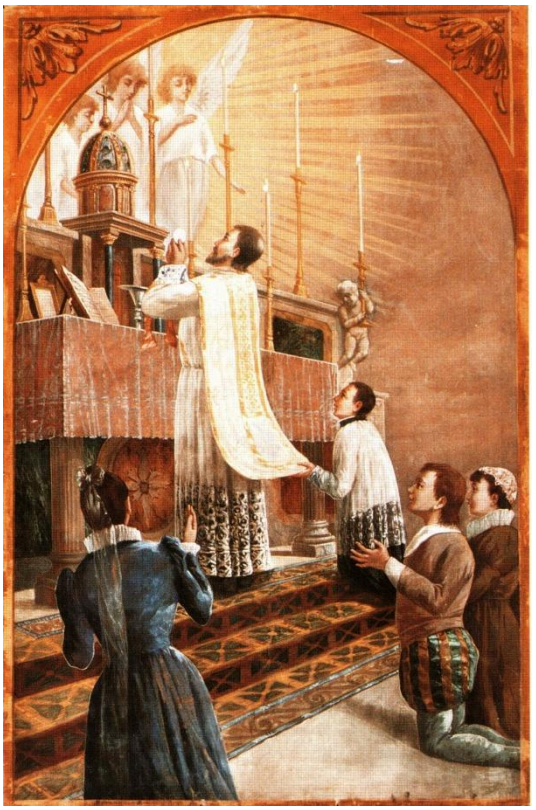
1) **Subdeaconate** on September 19, 1928, Saturday of the Four Ember Days of Advent. There were 30 candidates for various orders: nine for the subdeaconate; six for the deaconate; eight for the priesthood; three for the tonsure; four for the Minor Orders. Zaccaria is the second in the list of the subdeacons.
2) **Deaconate** on December 19, 1528, Saturday of the Four Ember Days of winter. The Notary Oldoini announces the ordinations as done for the others, but then he leaves blank the following three pages either because he did not receive the names, or because he was going to do it later, or maybe the list of deacons got lost.
3) **Priesthood** on February 20, 1529, Saturday of the Four Ember Days of spring. It is an important and spectacular ordination with 99 candidates: 21 for the priesthood, 26 for the deaconate, 18 for the subdeaconate, 21 for the Minor Orders, and 15 for the tonsure. Zaccaria is the third in the list of those to be ordained as priests.

For all three ordinations the bishop was Luca di Seriate (Bergamo), who was suffragan of the bishop of Cremona and Ravenna, Cardinal Benedetto Accolti (who was always absent), titular also of Duvno (Erzegovina), suffragan diocese of Split (Spalato).

All three ordinations took place in the chapel of St. Joseph, along the left wall of the Cathedral central nave. It is here that Anthony Mary received all the Major Orders and most likely also the tonsure and Minor Orders (June 6, 1528).

The first Mass

The customs of the time was to procrastinate the date as long as possible for a better preparation. Knowing Anthony Mary's zeal for Holy Communion we can, with good probability, suggest a hypothesis. We know, first of all, that after the Deaconate (December 19, 1528), the Saint continued his preparation for the Priesthood with those gesture of divesting himself of everything, almost following to the letter what he will say in the Sermons, "Go to God free, and do not be attached to anything." So, when did he celebrate his First Mass? We cannot say it with precision, but knowing his love for the Holy Eucharist he must not have waited a year and a half like St. Ignatius of Loyola! We can assume, perhaps, that he did it on the following Easter (March 28, 1529); that is, more or less one month after his priestly ordination, in the church of St. Vitale.



Those present affirmed that angels in adoration were visible around the newly ordained priest as he elevated the host (the elevation of the chalice was not part of the liturgy yet). Fr. Gabuzio, first historian of the Congregation, was able to get the account from eyewitnesses, like his mother and few intimate friends.

He was ordained *ad titulum patrimoni,* a patrimony he had given to his mother, freeing him from the system of ecclesiastical benefits, which allowed him freedom of movements since he was not incardinated in any diocese.

Apostolate

Anthony Mary started the reform of his city, having first reformed his own very self, as it seems to be indicated by the foundation of a bequest entitled to the "Conversion of St. Paul," the reformer and missionary apostle. He started from those in position of responsibility: fathers in their families, professionals in their jobs. It was in vain to dream of a new world without beginning in the family and in the professional world: the two pillars of society. And so, in the little church of St. Vitale, parents and professionals got together in a group called "Friendship." The patron saint is St. Paul "true friend of God" (Sermon III); the specific aim of the group is the renewal (personal, of their own family, in their professional world); activities suiting this achievement were mysticism, sacramental life, meditation, spiritual direction, charity: Anthony Mary is the first to give an example of heroic charity, without saving any time or energies.

We are left with two important documents about this "Friendship": six Sermons on the Decalogue (the autographs are in the General Archive), and one letter about spiritual direction to a lawyer from Cremona, Carlo Magni, dated July 21, 1531. They are the mirror of Anthony M. Zaccaria: clear ideas and aims, determination, biblical orientation, and especially a certain sense of haste, to do fast and right away, almost if he knew that his years were counted.

Besides the "Friends," Anthony Mary was also interested in the renewal of monasteries (see the appendix to his Sermon I, addressed to the nuns), directing toward spiritual life some ladies (Valeria Alieri Del Borgio, later foundress of the Angelics of St. Marta), coordinating the dispersed energies of some solitary reformers like Fra Bono Lizzari, who later will follow him to Milan and Vicenza. He was so effective that the city of Cremona, as we said above, declared him "Father of the city." He was only 28 years of age!

Guastalla

But God asked of him a great sacrifice, at first accepted with reluctance: to cut off himself from everything and move to Guastalla as chaplain of the Countess Ludovica Torelli. It seems that he

did it in obedience to his new spiritual director, Fra Battista da Crema.

In Guastalla, in the severe and dismal fortress, as depicted in a painting done by Battaglia before its demolition, Anthony Mary, besides being a priest, did a little of everything: he was even a secretary for the Countess! It is documented that he had a little room where he used to hide to pray, study, and reflect. He used to celebrate the Eucharist in the chapel of the fortress, used for worship and for meetings. There, in front of the wooden Madonna with Child (today in the cathedral of Guastalla), notary documents were issued with Anthony Mary as witness or as a stipulator.

In the beginning of 1530's, religious renewal took place in the little ducky of Guastalla. It seems that it had almost a Calvinist imprint, under the apostolic zeal of the Countess, of her young chaplain, and especially of Fra Battista da Crema, who in 1530 had received the permission from his Dominican Superiors to reside in Guastalla, permission confirmed on July 10, 1531 by a Breve of Pope Clement VII. Most likely the "bans" promulgated by the Countess Torelli against immoral customs, blasphemies, work on feast-days, gambling, bad manners by public officials, were the work of Fra Battista more than Torelli or Zaccaria. The "bans" are kept in the Maltodi Library in Guastalla.

Milan - Eternal Wisdom Oratory - The Three Institutes

We do not know for sure when the Holy Founder went to Milan for the first time: probably in the Summer of 1530 he accompanied the Countess there and he came in contact with the Oratory of "Eternal Wisdom": a lay group, tied to the Augustinian monastery of Santa Marta. Its Founder, Giannantonio Bellotti, had died on October 27, 1528. The golden period had been under the charismatic leadership of the Venerable Arcangela Panigarola, Abbess of the monastery, who had died on January 16, 1524. Due to a lack of leadership the group was experiencing a period of crisis. Anthony Mary was enchanted by those young

but strayed energies; he gave them new life, the way he knew how, leading them to personal renewal and to many charitable activities. There he became good friend especially with the young notary public Bartolomeo Ferrari, and the young architect Giacomo Antonio Morigia, a spiritual friendship which will produce abundant fruits.

This friendship was kept alive not only by correspondence (we have an autograph letter of January 4, 1531, addressed to them), but also with long (how long we do not know) periods of permanence by Ferrari and Morigia in the Guastalla fortress, as guest of the Countess Torelli and of Fra Battista, almost a first experience of community life. As a matter of fact it was from the conversations among these people that a grandiose and generous project was born: sell the feud of Guastalla to the best offer, and move to Milan, so much in need of spiritual renewal, to start their program of reform.

It seems that the final transfer to Milan took place at the end of August 1532, since the series of notary documents attesting the presence of the Countess Torelli, Anthony M. Zaccaria, Ferrari and Morigia in Milan starts at the beginning of September.

The Countess meantime, on August 3, 1530, had bought from Paolo Canobbio and from a certain Mr. and Mrs. Vismara, two neighboring houses by the Basilica of St. Ambrose, in the parish of St. Peter in Caminadella. Soon this became the meeting place for the "Eternal Wisdom" oratory. Under the guidance and inspiration of Anthony Mary it was transformed into a new religious family with three branches: *"The Sons of Saint Paul,"* or Barnabites, *"The Daughters of St. Paul"* or Angelics, and *"The Devotes of St. Paul,"* or Married. The first two eventually will be canonically approved, while the Married never did; actually they were the first institute of Anthony M. Zaccaria since they were nothing else than the continuation of the "Friendship" group he had created in Cremona, and the continuation of that section of the "Eternal Wisdom" called to married life, and so not able to take religious vows.

All the members of the "Eternal Wisdom" kept meeting, regularly in Torelli's house for spiritual conferences, spiritual direction in common, and to organize their charitable activities: they used to visit the jail and the major hospital in Milan (do not forget that Bartolomeo Morigia in his first testament of 1534, left everything to the hospital; and that Mr. Cacciaguerra, in 1538, was sent by Saint Philip Neri from Rome to learn from the Barnabites how to take care of the sick; also remember, the Holy Founder was a doctor!).

However, their plans were not being formulated without difficulties.

Hesitations

While visiting his mother in Cremona, on January 4, 1531, Anthony Mary addressed a lengthy letter to Morigia and Ferrari on the need of firmness and determination. The previous year the three of them had initiated a new religious Order but Anthony Mary was still chaplain at Guastalla where he was usually staying, in a very modest room of his choice in Ludovica's palace. Ferrari and Morigia lived in Milan, each in his own house: Morigia, still a layman,

in his father's mansion, and Ferrari, a simple cleric, in rented homes. Something needed to be done.

Quite humbly, the young priest confessed to his companions that he himself had experienced and was experiencing a lack of decisiveness: "*Oftentimes I am deeply amazed at my grievous irresolution which holds sway and for so long has held sway my soul."* (One may sense here a humble exaggeration!). Then, referring to their embryonic order, Anthony Mary continued: "*One must think well, over and over again, ponder and ruminate, when something of importance is to be decided upon. But once the thing has been thought over and one has received the proper counsel, one should not hesitate to carry out what has been decided upon. The reason is that in the ways of God what is required above all else is promptness and expeditiousness.*" Apparently, Anthony Mary expected his companions to join him in Guastalla to start working for the people: "*Come on, Brothers, get up and come together with me*" so that we can together fight this ail root of irresolution in any case, he concluded stirringly. "*Come, come, Brothers! If up to now we have known any irresolution, let us cast it off together with all negligence and <u>let us run like madmen not only toward God but toward our neighbor as well</u>. It is our neighbor alone that can receive what we cannot give to God, who does not need anything from us*" (The underlined exhortation is etched in the soul of every Barnabite since the earliest days of his formation).

St. Catherine: first residence in Milan

A canonical structure was imperative, but Anthony Zaccaria wanted to give the official start to his new family of Saint Paul in a church dedicated to him, and in the whole city of Milan there was none!

The only church with a chapel dedicated to the apostles Peter and Paul was the one of St. Catherine of Alexandria (it was destroyed in the 1700's), along the Naviglio (the canal of Milan), by the bridge of the Fabbri, in the parish of St. Vincent in Prato by Porta Ticinese. Anthony Mary rather than none was happy with this one. The chaplain, Don Tommaso Suardi, was very happy to give it to him, together with the living quarters, since Anthony Mary, as part of the rent payment, promised to celebrate a daily Mass in that chapel.

He moved in on September 29, 1533, together with Father Ferrari only, since the house could not accommodate more people. Later on, when they bought some neighboring little houses from Cristoforo Migliavacca and Giampietro Galli, and especially the house and large garden of Mr. and Mrs. Preda, the premises were big enough for the other seven to move in between July and September 1534: the first to arrive was Fr. Morigia, the last Fr. Soresina.

The First Approval: February 18, 1533

And so Anthony Mary, Ferrari, and Morigia at first took up residence in the house that Ludovica had bought in Milan two years earlier. By the end of the year they were joined by John James de' Caseis, a layman probably in his thirties, and by a 35-year old diocesan priest, Francis di Lecco. This little band of five young men, the first Barnabites, were not formally to begin their common life until 1534 and only in 1535 were they to give themselves a habit, a name, and specific assignments. However not to procrastinate any longer, and taking advantage of favorable circumstances, they decided to send a formal petition to Clement VII.

The favorable circumstances were: first, the Pope was meeting the Emperor in Bologna, a city much closer to Milan than Rome; secondly one of the papal secretaries was Ferrari's brother, Basilio.

Accordingly, the petition was signed first by Ferrari, now a priest, and then by Anthony Mary.

The object of the petition was quite modest. Obviously, there was no question of establishing a teaching order. Also, there was no mention of systematic reforming activities. The petitioners simply requested the authorization to profess the three vows of obedience, chastity, and poverty, before the Cardinal of Milan or his Vicar, and to begin common life somewhere in the Milan diocese "in order to devote themselves more vigorously and unrestrictedly to God's gracious purposes and to probe more deeply matters pertaining to God."

In an unusually prompt reply, Clement VII granted all their requests on February 18, 1533. It was also unusual, and probably unique, to have an Order approved before it started functioning. However, judging from hindsight, the Vicar of Christ acted prophetically.

Text of the Breve of approval

Pope Clement VII.
Beloved sons, greetings and apostolic blessings.
Gladly we grant and accompany with appropriate privileges your desire, so that, in a spirit of humility, you could provide for the salvation of your own soul and those of others. You have asked us to expose that you, with other three companions who have the same feelings, to be able to dedicate yourselves with more freedom to the will of God and to what pertains to Him, desire to profess the three substantial vows of religion in the hands of our venerable brother the Archbishop of Milan or the Vicar General, and at the same time to establish yourselves and to live in some place of your choice in the city or in the diocese of Milan; for this reason you have implored us that we deign,

according to our apostolic benevolence, to paternally condescend to such pious desire of yours. We, then, adhering to your petition, in virtue of the apostolic authority, with this letter which will always be in vigor also in the future, by special grace, notwithstanding the Constitutions and the general or special Ordinances issued by the Holy See or by provincial or synodal Councils and notwithstanding any other disposition on the contrary, we grant and allow you and each one of you to make such profession in the hands of the said Archbishop or his Vicar; and to those who, in the future, will join you, we grant to make the same profession of the three Vows in the hands of either one of you two or in the ones of the Superior Pro Tempore of your Congregation; and so also we grant you to live together and in common in the place you will select, but under the jurisdiction of the local Ordinary: and moreover we grant the power to freely and licitly make all the ordinances and rules which will favor your spiritual good and the development of your institution provided that they be reasonable and honest and not contrary to the sacred canons, likewise the power to modify, abrogate and substitute with others totally new, according to your best judgment and the conditions of the times.

Given in Bologna, with the seal of the Fisherman's Ring,
on February 18, 1533, tenth year of our pontificate.

In the back: *To the beloved sons Bartolomeo Ferrari and Antonio Maria Zaccaria, presbyters of Milan and of Cremona.*

First Constitutions and Rule

The first official Barnabite Constitutions were to be promulgated in 1552 and the definitive ones in 1579, but the first Barnabite Community followed a plan of constitutions drawn by their "first father and founder," Fra Battista and, perhaps, the Rule of St. Augustine. Generally speaking, every new religious Order was expected to choose one of the four classic Rules, namely, the Augustinian, the Basilian, the Benedictine, and the Franciscan. It seems that Fra Battista, a Dominican, favored the Rule of St. Augustine, which stressed love of God and neighbor and the common life.

Sometimes before his death on January 1, 1534 and probably after the first approval of the Order, Fra Battista was requested by Anthony Mary to draft a constitution. Fra Battista wrote it in Latin and Anthony Mary translated it into Italian, expanding it somewhat. But death prevented him from completing this work and so this constitution was never promulgated.

Strictly speaking, our first Fathers had no need of written Constitutions because of the chapter system adopted by Anthony Mary. With this system all issues great and small, were resolved at very frequent community meetings. When every religious was present, the meeting was labeled "General Chapter." Decisions issued at these meetings were called "Orders." They could be modified or dropped very easily with changing circumstances.

Spirit and Charism

It was in the church of St. Catherine, and in the houses of the Countess Torelli, that the first religious-apostolic activities of the new religious family took place.

Fra Battista's and Anthony Mary's prudence and realism were not of the common variety. Both men were clearly led more by the Spirit than by ordinary considerations. This

rare charismatic attitude is rarely understood by the majorities and by the authorities, also because it is quite difficult to distinguish between real charism and its various counterfeits. Only time can tell. So, Fra Battista was the object of severe restraints because of his closeness to Ludovica. Moreover, due to his paradoxical style, Fra Battista's writings were placed on the Index of Prohibited Books for over three centuries. (From 1564 to 1900, three years after St. Anthony Mary's canonization). His doctrine, the bone and marrow of Anthony's spirituality, was condemned (albeit conditionally) as "partly scandalous, partly heretical, partly unreliable in matters of faith and was to be totally shunned by all the faithful."

Similarly the unconcerned and refreshing spontaneity of Anthony Mary's men and Ludovica's girls which delighted and inspired many observers could not but attract the hostility of many others. The young enthusiasts met in the same house for self-accusation, prayer, and the "*collatio*." They performed acts of humility and penance, both in the cathedral and in the busiest streets of Milan.

To preach Christ Crucified and proclaim their contempt for the world, they stained their faces, wore heavy ropes around their necks, flogged themselves, threw themselves on the ground to be stepped upon by passersby, carried large crosses, addressed people at crossroads and in public squares, and in the middle of the cathedral loudly asked for God's mercy.

In a different vein, but with the same purpose, they would go to a market place with a large basket to offer their services as porters to any shopper, or they would play the role of beggars for Christ asking for donations on behalf of a particular charity. One charity had to do with the girls of Saint Valeria, an institute for girls in trouble for which Anthony and Ludovica used the services of Fra Bono. He was the industrious man from Cremona who knew how to get things done. In 1532 he obtained that the cathedral bells would toll at 3:00 p.m. on Fridays to commemorate the Lord's death, at which time Anthony's men and Ludovica's girls would gather in the cathedral to meditate with "heads bowed and arms outstretched." In 1534 Fra Bono was the main fundraiser for the girls of Saint Valeria.

Persecution

Surely this kind of life was a startling thing for people of the highest social class, and unbearable to the proud attitude of the nobles of the time, to the point that some of them reacted violently against some of their own relatives members of this penitential group, "to vengeance the shame brought to the honor of the family." The news spread: someone started to talk about heresy or at least about a "dangerous novelty"; preachers attacked from the pulpit these new heretics and invited the faithful to burn their houses. Two years earlier, in the cathedral of Milan, an old Carmelite had denounced the promiscuous gatherings of Anthony Mary's men and Ludovica's girls. The Dominican Cornelio Balbo from the pulpit of Sta. Maria della Rosa "used most of his lectures to accuse those Fathers (Barnabites), condemning them as hypocrites and condemning in any way possible their conduct, trying to put them in bad light in front of the people," to the point that at any time, "carried by greater fervor in speaking evil about the Fathers, he enticed them to burn their house, as they would make a sacrifice pleasing to God." Besides this Dominican, who else was behind these accusations which by now will always accompany Fra Battista?

Criticism grew so intense and systematic that the inquisition intervened, together with the Diocesan Curia and the Senate of Milan, and on October 5, 1534, the trial started.

The charge: these young men and women were indulging in a new-fashioned behavior which imperiled public order, individual dignity and the authenticity of the faith.

The Countess was anxious to clarify her position so as to prevent these calumnies from negatively influencing her request to the Pontiff for approval. She felt it necessary to expedite the trial and obtain a verdict which would "bring peace and quiet and satisfy the Apostolic See."

October 4, 1534

The situation was crucial. This was fully revealed in an impassioned talk delivered by Anthony Mary on October 4, feast of St. Francis of Assisi, the eve of the trial. It was Anthony Mary's finest hour.

The spiritual father whom Anthony Mary worshipped was gone: Fra Battista's death nine months earlier on January 1, 1534, had left Anthony Mary and Ludovica in command. As a priest, Anthony Mary had the leading role. The two friends, closer than ever now, were determined to keep Fra Battista's legacy alive. The visible devils mentioned in Fra Battista's Constitutions were at work and it was now the time to put into practice the reformer's guidelines outlined in chapter 18 of the Constitutions. Also, Fra Battista's overwhelming devotion to St. Paul had been thoroughly assimilated by Anthony Mary. His talk was studded with quotations from St. Paul. To boost the morale of his frightened partners, Anthony Mary reminded them that "anybody who tries to live in devotion to Christ is certain to be attacked' (2 Tim 3:12). "Here we are," he continued, "fools for the sake of Christ, who can boast about our sufferings, because those whom the world thinks common and contemptible are the ones that God has chosen to show up those who are everything. Let us not lose sight of Jesus, who endured the cross, disregarding the shamefulness of it and we shall prove that we are servants of God by great fortitude in times of sufferings, prepared for honor or disgrace, taken for impostors while we are genuine"(1 Cor 4:10; Rom 5:3; 1 Cor 1:26; Heb 12:1; 2 Cor 6:4).

This exhortation was reported almost verbatim by Fr. Gabuzio who had heard it from Fr. Soresina, an eye witness. The Sisters are not named but it is doubtful that he excluded his dear daughters from the meeting. It would have been unfair to exclude them, since even they had the right to suffer for the name of Christ.

When Fr. Gabuzio transcribed the exhortation, too many motives had cropped up to induce him to exclude them. However, it is very likely that if the Father Founder deemed it opportune to hold a meeting just for the clerics, he would have held another for his favored daughters. Even if they were less disturbed by the fact that as women they could not perform any public act of abasement which they could "in their own homes or those of their parents,"

they could show in public their lowliness by dressing poorly and by giving aid and service to the sick. Their age and sex placed them in a very precarious position.

Anthony Mary's performance moved his partners to tears. Thoroughly uplifted, they enthusiastically embraced one another and repeatedly promised to persevere to the end and declared themselves ready to shed their blood for Christ and for the brethren. (It was after this experience that the Fathers, who had begun common life in the summer of 1534 but without the rule of poverty, embraced this rule).

The trial & Favorable verdict

The trial was conducted by three excellent persons: Senator Francis Casati, who represented the civil authority; John M. Tosi, who represented Cardinal Ippolito II; and Melchiorr Crivelli who represented the Tribunal of the Inquisition. Nothing reprehensible was found.

When the accusations were examined it was found that the defendants were being accused only of excessive humility and devotion. When the suspicions were exposed as false and the opinions as not worthy of consideration, the trial was suspended. Only then did the detractors submit. The Carmelite friar who had started this investigation asked pardon as the instigator of these accusations.

The conclusion of the court was: "We need many of these heretics!" But a formal verdict was not given possibly not to offend some powerful accusers. The suspension of the trial did not fully satisfy the Company. The Countess, as we will see later, wanted a definitive verdict and the trial was resumed on August 20, 1537. This resulted in a favorable verdict and with much satisfaction, and, as attested by the historians, it was received with great relieve by the whole city of Milan.

We know that the acts of the trial were gathered in two volumes to show that the tribunal had listened to all possible witnesses, but unfortunately they have been lost. Fr. Fontana explains: the Barnabites knew of the existence of a copy of these acts in the archives of the Inquisition in St. Mary's of Grace in Milan; when this was about to be suppressed, they sent someone to make a copy. This person started to copy the *Processum dominae Vastallae mini 1536,* but stopped thinking to be the wrong one. When the Fathers realized that that was the document they needed, it was too late since everything had been burned by the Inquisition.

All in all, it was a bracing experience for the first Barnabites who had just organized their first community.

The initial organization had to do with providing a house for common life, a habit, and a name.

The money for the house was supplied also by Anthony Mary's relatives, but mostly by Ferrari and Ludovica.

For a habit they opted for a simplified version of the cassock worn by the Milanese Ambrosian clergy which was dark brown, and for a hat they chose the older round hat instead of the newer biretta, the square hat with three projections above the crown, preferred by the younger clergy.

Like the Theatines, they called themselves Clerics Regular but without any further specification.

Approval and first house of the Angelic Sisters

We recall that in 1530, at Fra Battista's urging, Ludovica began to gather women concerned about the state of the Church. Following Fra Battista's death, Anthony Mary became much more committed to Ludovica's group, quickly assuming a leading role. Presently, he urged Ludovica to obtain papal approval to establish a religious community of women who would work side by side with the priests.

With typical dispatch Ludovica sent a petition to the Pope and began to look for a place to build a convent, and Pope Paul III sent his approval with a Bull dated January 15, 1535.

But no one wanted to give a room to a Countess who was the star of so many gossips. They searched in many corners of the city, and maybe it was on this occasion that the Holy Founder spotted the church of Saint Barnabas. He was hoping to conclude the deal by the end of 1538, as he wrote to Father Ferrari in that year, but it will be only in 1545 that Fr. Morigia will conclude it. But Saint Barnabas alone was not suitable for a monastery: too isolated, outside the walls of the city, communicating with the city only through the drawbridges of Porta Pia and Porta Romana; therefore the project was abandoned.

The Holy Founder for the sake of the Angelics was ready to even sacrifice the Barnabites: in order to build the convent he had offered the house of St. Catherine with the garden. We find this out from a notary act of April 3, 1535 in which the Countess Torelli had reached an agreement with the neighboring Sisters of St. Bernardino to erect a dividing wall to avoid any disturbance. But nothing was done about it.

After long praying and searching finally, in Porta Ludovica, by the church of Saint Eufemia, they were able to buy, almost miraculously, 24 little houses, which partially destroyed and partially remodeled, became the new convent. In this way the prophecy of sixty years before made by Blessed Amedeo Menez da Silva, founder of the convent and church of Santa Maria della Pace, where he is laid at rest: "These little houses, now places of sin, will become homes for angels," became true. The Angelics in procession moved in on the afternoon of October 5, 1535; on Christmas the Holy Founder celebrated the first Mass in the temporary chapel located in a large room bought from the Brasca brothers; on January 25 the convent was dedicated to Saint Paul, and on October 4, in a chapter, on the suggestion of the young novice Isabella Baldironi (Agnes in religion), the sisters decided to be called "Angelics," because of the Holy Eucharist they were receiving every day.

The new Sisters chose the Dominican habit and the Rule of St. Augustine. Their first Superior was Battista Negri da Sesto, not Ludovica. Actually, Ludovica (as Anthony Mary) never professed the religious vows. The reason was a practical one: she wanted to remain free from canonical formalities in order to be able to engage in any activity, including financial transactions that would help both Barnabites and Angelics. Moreover, for the time being she

was still the Countess of Guastalla. However, she enjoyed all the prerogatives of a foundress, as such, for instance, she drew up wise rules for the new Sisters, although no doubt with Anthony Mary's assistance.

Second house of the Barnabites

The old house by Saint Ambrose, empty now, was generously donated by Torelli to the Barnabites. They moved there from Saint Catherine at the end of 1535, able now to better organize their community life.

On April 15, 1535 Anthony M. Zaccaria proposed the election of Father Morigia as Superior, while he would be called the "Major." The house of Saint Catherine, empty now, was sold to the Sisters of St. Bernardino for two thousand liras, on February 9, 1537.

Second approval of the Barnabites: August 25, 1535

In 1537 there was a revamping of suspicions and accusations in Milan. For the Barnabites the accusations were of pelagian heresies and disorders like the *Beguines* or the Poor of Lyon.[1] Barnabites and Angelics were in the process of assuming their first mission in

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BEGUINES

A group of lay people who in the streets of the city through their demeanor and their habits pretended to be men and women of the Church, which they were not, or to belong to a Congregation without any Rule.

Beguines and Beghards, members of certain Roman Catholic religious communities for women (Beguines) and men (Beghards) prominent in northwestern Europe from the 12th to the 14th century. They differed from monks and nuns in that most did not take permanent vows, promising only to do good works and not to marry as long as they lived in the community.

The first communities of Beguines seem to have been organized about 1170 by the revivalist priest Lambert le Bègue in Liège, Belgium, and from there to have spread rapidly to much of western Europe. The Beghards appeared somewhat later, probably in the early 13th century, modeling their communities after those of the Beguines. The foundation of such groups reflected the general flowering of the religious life among the laity in the towns of northern Europe during the later Middle Ages. The communities of Beguines also served as refuges for women left widowed or unmarried by the participation of large numbers of men in the Crusades. The members frequently lived in individual apartments in a large, separately enclosed section of town called the Beguinage. They dressed in distinctive costumes and spent their days in prayer, education, care of the sick, and work such as weaving.

At first, the Beguines received women from all social classes, but gradually many of the establishments were transformed into poor houses for destitute girls and widows. In the meantime, a portion of the Beghards ceased living in communities and took to individual

Vicenza, but they could not start unless their name was clear of any accusation, therefore, they themselves petitioned the Church authority to reopen the old trial of 1534 so as to reach a normal sentence (remember that no formal acquittal had been published at the end of the first trial). The Inquisitor, the Vicar General, and the Delegate of the Senate did exactly that concluding with a sentence of total absolution. On August 25, 1535, the Pope replied with a solemn Bull, addressed to Anthony, Priest of Cremona, and to Ferrari, priest of Milan. For a trial period of five years, the Barnabites were exempt from the jurisdiction of the Archbishop of Milan and placed under the immediate authority of the Holy See. The papal Bull praised their religious intentions and approved their common life, their habit, and the name of Clerics Regular. They were granted the right to profess their vows and to appoint a superior for three years.

Acknowledging their devotion to St. Paul, the Pope granted them permission to dedicate their first conventual church to the Doctor of the Gentiles with the right to officiate it every day of the year except Easter.

Vicenza: The First Mission

In May, 1537, an unexpected and exciting request reached Anthony Mary from Rome. The Bishop of Vicenza, Cardinal Nicholas Ridolfi, wanted him to go to his Episcopal see, 100 miles east of Milan, for the specific purpose of reforming two convents, namely, the convent of St. Mary Magdalene for reformed women and the one of the Sylvestrines, a branch of the Benedictine Sisters. Both convents were founded by relatives of St. Cajetan Thiene and were now experiencing a secularization crisis. Anthony Mary responded enthusiastically. For the first time, the Sons of St. Paul and the Angelics of St. Paul were going to work outside the familiar boundaries of Milan.

Unable to go in person for the moment, Anthony Mary put together the most experienced band he could find and in July they reached Vicenza. This first group was made up of Francis di Lecco, the first priest to join Anthony Mary's community; Ludovica, Anthony Mary's sister-soul from the beginning; the brilliant Angelic Sister Paola Antonia Negri, and the indispensable Fra Bono.

For about two months, September and October, Anthony Mary joined them in person. On his return to Milan, he sent Fr. Bartolomeo Ferrari to take charge of the whole enterprise.

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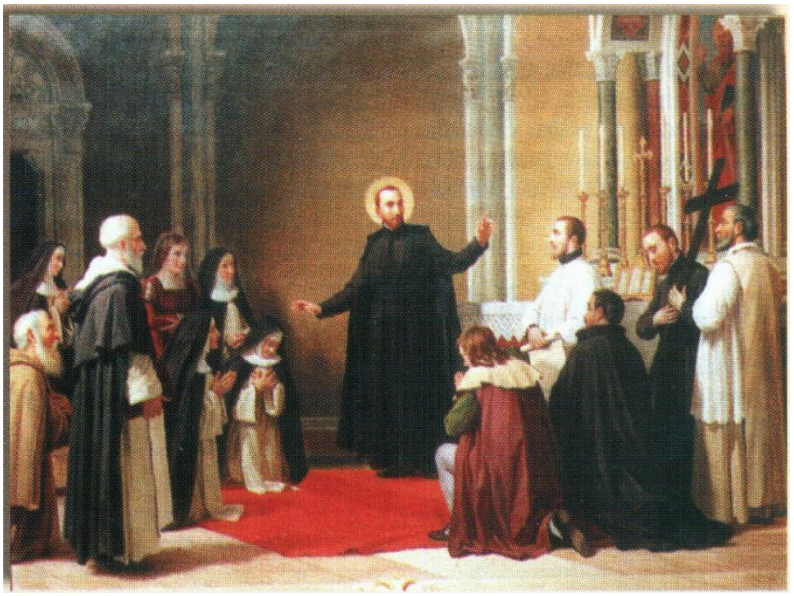
begging. By the late 13th century, many members were suspected of heresy, primarily because of their association with the Spiritual Franciscans, a rigoristic community that had been condemned by church officials. As a result, numerous groups were closed in the 14th century, and many members were burned at the stake. The Beghards disappeared altogether; some of the Beguines were assimilated into other religious orders, and a few still remain in Belgium. (*Microsoft ® Encarta ® 2007*.)

Valdensians – paupers de Lugduno (Lyon)

They had multiplied in Lombardy: Rebels to the Church hierarchy and to the precepts of the Church in the name of an idea of perfection which did not recognize any authority except founded on holiness and so free from the normative power of the institution.

For a year, Fr. James Anthony Morigia had served as Superior General of the Order. For several reasons, Anthony Mary had refused this position. First of all, on account of his complete involvement with the Angelic Sisters; then, because he was still chaplain of Guastalla, and also to keep himself available for his mother as well as for any eventuality concerning his work of reform. In Vicenza Anthony Mary's mission band introduced the Forty-Hours devotion and started a Society for the Married. The mission was successful as attested by Serafino da Fermo in two devotional books written about this time. However, difficulties were not lacking. For instance, after one and a half year work, the gentle and introverted Ferrari suffered a spell of depression. Apparently, some benefactors withdrew their financial support and progress seemed much slower than Ferrari had anticipated. He felt overwhelmed and very much unequal to the task.

Busy as ever in Milan, on October 8, 1538, Anthony Mary dispatched Ferrari and his associates an inspiring letter brimming with affectionate encouragement. "*Heart of our heart in Christ*," he began, "*why do you harbor any doubts? Didn't you see that you never lacked anything when you had to share something with others?... Rest assured that before you say anything and while you say it, the Crucified One will precede and accompany you, your every word, and even every worthy intention of yours."* Typically, three quotations from St. Paul followed to the effect that one should stay within the limits of work set by God himself; that the word of God is sharper than any double-edged sword and it cuts all the way through, to where the joints and marrow come together; and that nothing can stop an apostle of Christ, *"neither the world above nor the world below.*"



Throughout this letter, Anthony mentioned a variety of lay associates, men and women alike, always with endearing terms: my sweet Pauline, my faithful Lucretia, my sweet lady Faustina, our beloved Aloysious, Anthony, Francis. He sent "Thousands and thousands of greetings and kisses." He did not forget the barber and his wife whom he had met during a brief stay in Vicenza. As a true man of God, Anthony Mary was a man for all people. His sensitive and affectionate nature was a perfect instrument in his apostolate and in his role as leader of three reforming societies.

The success of the Vicenza mission may also be measured in terms of several outstanding Barnabite vocations: a Vicenza nobleman and scholarly jurist, Niccolò D'Aviano; a nobleman of Udine and district attorney of Vicenza, Giovanni Melso; another jurist from Treviso, Gerolamo Marta; and Giovanni Caimo, a Milanese prelate who happened to be in Vicenza for some church business. Particularly interesting was a young vocation, Titus degli

Alessi. This young nobleman from Vicenza by chance met Anthony Mary in the fall of 1537. That meeting changed Tito's life. He eventually joined the Barnabites in 1546.

Another happy outcome of the Vicenza mission was the next mission in Verona upon the request of its bishop, Matthew Giberti (1524-1543). Coauthor of the celebrated *Consilium de emendanda Ecclesia* (1537), Giberti was the first great bishop of the new times. His reforming activity was a perfect model for the Council of Trent (1545-1563). Giberti's request attested to the excellence of the Barnabites and the Angelics in their work of reform.

Role of the Laity: Men and Women

As a committed Christian layman, Anthony Mary had preached in the little church of St. Vitale, contiguous to his ancestral house in Cremona. As a newly ordained priest, he had started a center of evangelism in the same church for married men. The quality and the degree of their Christian commitment are clearly shown in the extant sermons of the young priest. Personal holiness was to be achieved by imitating Christ and God Himself through the frequent reception of the Eucharist, (something quite unusual then), bodily penance, examination of conscience, mental prayer, praying the psalms, familiarity with the Gospels and willingness to share it with others.

It was quite natural, then, for Anthony Mary to summon the laity to work side by side with his priests and sisters. In Milan he established a Society of the Married. The nature of his relationship with them is seen in an extraordinarily warm and affectionate letter which he sent to a couple of this Society, Bernard and Laura Omodei, a nobleman and a noblewoman of Milan. The high Christian standards that these people were expected to follow are spelled out in another letter, this one to Carlo Magni, a lawyer of Cremona. Constant prayerfulness, self-knowledge, and concentration on one's own dominant weakness, no self-indulgence to the point of refraining from what is allowed, unrelenting pursuit of moral and religious perfection: all this Anthony Mary expected of his lay associates, men and women alike.

These lay people attended the community meetings of Barnabites and Angelics. Most of all, they fully participated in their work of reform. One instrument of reform was a new devotion, the Forty Hours

The Forty Hours Devotion

This new devotion was the culmination of various practices dating back to the 13th and 14th centuries. A forty-hours or three-days period of prayer before the Blessed Sacrament was first introduced in Milan sometime before 1528 by the Augustinian, John Anthony Bellotti, the founder of the Oratory of Eternal Wisdom. It was there that Anthony Mary first came in contact with this devotion. Bellotti's practice, however, was limited to four days of the year: Christmas, Easter, Pentecost and Assumption. Moreover, the Blessed Sacrament was kept in the tabernacle. Anthony Mary's innovation consisted in making this practice continuous throughout the diocese with the added note of solemn exposition of the Sacred Host outside the tabernacle. This took place for the first time in May 1537. Anthony's initiative was aided by his

friend Fra Bono and, coincidentally, by the Capuchin, Joseph da Fermo.

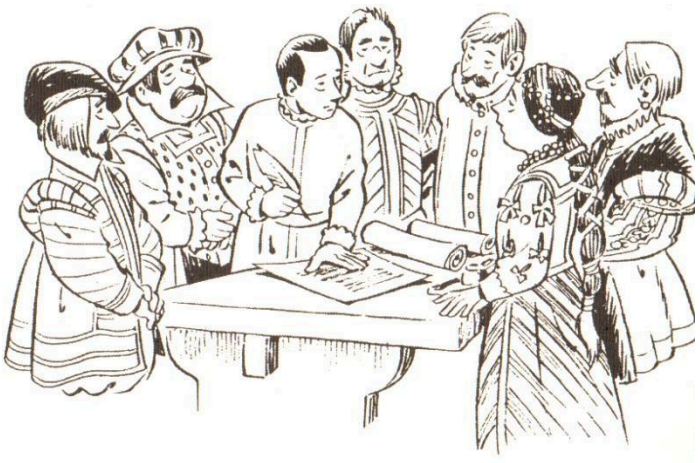
To appreciate the significance of Anthony Mary's initiative, one should bear in mind the conditions surrounding the Eucharist at that time. Today's Forty Hours are a common feature in the devotional landscape of the church, so common, in fact, that this devotion has lost much of its original impact. Of course, this is also due to the great liturgical revival of our times. In Anthony Mary's time things were vastly different. Mass was celebrated on rare occasions. Holy Communion was a privilege denied, by and large, to the laity. Hence, the Blessed Sacrament was not kept, most of the time, at the main altar, but in the sacristy or in some dark church corner, even in a glass vase or in a grimy wooden box where ants and other bugs could essay find their way in. Churches became places for anybody to stroll around, for lovers to meet, for people to hold conversations or games, or warehouses of sort for people to keep households and utensils.

Against this background it is easier to appreciate the solemnity of the Forty-Hours devotion with its inherent benefits for the people.

Anthony Mary the Peacemaker

In the fall of 1538 Guastalla was sold by Countess Ludovica Torelli to the Governor of Milan, Ferrante Gonzaga, for 22,180 gold coins. The Emperor Charles V had already given his permission in May of 1538.

The legal proceedings were in the hands of the best lawyer of the time, Francesco Sfondrati, while Anthony M. Zaccaria was going often to Guastalla to convince the citizens about the change of owner. But on Christmas of 1538 Mr. Sfondrati's wife, Anna Visconti, died living six children: two boys and four girls. Ludovica Torelli decided to take the four girls (the youngest was only 18 months old), who later will all become Angelics; Anthony M. Zaccaria instead took care of the boys, of whom Niccolò will become Pope Gregory XIV, while Paolo got married.



Ludovica needed freedom and more funds to continue her work with Barnabites and Angelics. For this reason she did not hesitate to brave the negative reaction of Venice, of her relatives, and her citizens.

Gonzaga was a liegeman to the Emperor, Charles V. Guastalla was a fastness on the Po river. Hence, Venice feared that her navigational rights might be jeopardized by Guastalla's new lord.

The Torelli family was utterly furious because their expectations to take over the country were forever dashed. And the good people of Guastalla were altogether disconcerted at losing their popular Countess. Probably to assuage their feelings, Ludovica formally retained Anthony Mary as extraordinary chaplain to attend the most difficult controversies that might arise in her former country.

It so happened that a classic controversy arose in May, 1539. With the backing of Roman friends, Count Paul Torelli of Montù had secured from the Pope the right to levy certain navigational duties on the Po River. But the Guastalla people felt that Count Marcantonio Torelli of Montua should have the right. Therefore, they refused to abide by the

papal decision. Rome's reaction was immediate and peremptory. The whole county was laid under interdict, that is, all religious services and ministrations were discontinued with the exception of preaching and the sacrament of Penance.

Meantime the Count Carlo Gonzaga of Novellara, having heard that Guastalla was in the process of been sold, abusively occupied a key place for the distribution of the water. Ludovica appealed to the Senate in Milan, which ordered the lower court judge of Cremona to investigate. The judge accused Bernardo Zaccaria (Anthony's cousin), and on the other side Gonzaga... In other words a big mess which was slowing down if not jeopardizing the whole deal (it will be concluded on October 13, 1539, three months after the death of the Holy Founder). What was needed was a person with authority and intelligence who, on the spot, could shiftily handle the whole affair. The choice was Anthony M. Zaccaria.

He was glad to go because he loved Guastalla. He could easily avoid the interdict because, since 1535 he had the privilege of the "portable" altar, allowing him to celebrate the Mass and administer the sacraments at his will anywhere, including interdicted localities. Besides he knew to be well accepted by both parties, therefore he was hoping to speedily resolve the controversy.

Though only 36 years old, his tireless activity had overtaxed his average physical resources. He needed rest and care. Instead, he unhesitatingly left Milan the center of his innovative and burgeoning apostolate, and plunged himself into his first (and last) peace mission.

It was May, the beginning of the hot and muggy summer of the Po valley. As usual, Anthony Mary did not spare himself in giving spiritual assistance to the Guastalla citizens, while going back and forth between Guastalla and Montechiarugolo to bring peace between the two Torelli, and also reaching all the way to Novellara. Fragile as he was, this turned out to be too much. In the letter of June 20 to Mr. and Mrs. Omodei he accused "great tiredness in the body."

Anthony Mary's "Testament"

While absorbed in his work in Guastalla, Anthony Mary kept contact with his three societies in Milan. Actually the three extant letters - a remarkable total of 2,200 words penned in the brief space of ten busy days - were addressed to an Angelic Sister, a Barnabite Father, and a Married Couple. Written respectively on June 10, 11, and 20, that is within less than a month of his death, they became all unwillingly his final testament.

The occasion of the first letter was the realization on Anthony Mary's part that the peculiar behavior and mannerism of the Mistress of Novices, Paola Antonia Negri, whom he loved very dearly and esteemed highly to the point of referring to her as 'my one and only" and 'my spiritual guide," might be misconstrued by her community. The other two letters were replies to Giambattista Soresina, a newly ordained Barnabite, and to Bernard and Laura Omodei, respectively.

Anthony Mary's rich humanity is evident, first of all, in the warm tone and style of his letters. His addressees were variously called, "one and only, dearly beloved, sweet, magnificent, lovable, most cordial." His greetings were all-embracing and characterized by a rare attention to details. Every person mentioned was designated by a specific, at times quaint, adjective, such as: my darling, my faithful, my humble, my lover of voluntary suffering, my over-busy, my easily provoked, my simple, my affable.

Furthermore, his affectionate relationship was openly stated and used to give himself leverage in bringing home his points. So, when he exhorts Soresina to be completely honest

and open with the Superior General, Anthony Mary gives as a reason: "*if you care for my happiness*." "*What would you gain*," he continues, "*in giving me anxieties?*" "*If you don't change, I will be very unhappy and I will have to believe that Jesus Christ wants me to die with degenerate and not altogether legitimate children. I will have to pray to be taken from this earth and be spared such anguish. All my happiness depends on you and the others*."

To the Omodei's he wrote: "*Take and ponder my words with the same affection with which I am writing them*." "*Look at the tender and affectionate love I have for you. Look at my heart. It's wide open to you. I am ready to shed my blood for you. Believe me, I should be sick to my soul, if I were not sure of your striving for higher sanctity. I wrote this letter, not with my pen but with my heart. Read it every week. It is worth a book*."

Anthony Mary's spiritual concern was the prime reason for writing these letters. His spiritual doctrine, acquired from Fra Battista da Crema, patterned on Paul the Apostle, and exemplified in his own life style, was expressed in terms of moral austerity centered on Christ Crucified.

The Angelics were reminded to keep to the basic of Religious life. True, some exceptional individuals (not excluding the Mistress of Novices) might indulge in peculiar behavior; however, their safest norms were: avoidance of all oddities, uncompromising self-discipline, total obedience, strict self-denial, humility, and recollection. This seemingly stoic and forbidding moral code was none other than the one lived and proclaimed by Paul who preached Christ "Crucified on every side." Christ's crucifixion must constantly be relived in their own lives.

Soresina was reminded that true, humble obedience must be based not on the personality of the superiors, but strictly on faith. In all superiors he must see Christ, "the Shepherd of his soul," and act with them as he would with Jesus Christ Himself.

To the Omodei Anthony Mary presented a concise yet detailed plan of Christian living, as exacting as the one given to his Religious. He expected this married couple to aim at the highest degree of sanctity which he viewed as faithfulness to Christ Crucified. There was to be no slackening in their spiritual growth. This should be gradual but uninterrupted. Example: one should first avoid harmful talk, then idle talk, and then engage only in useful talk. Once again, uncompromising self-discipline and self-denial were essential. To train themselves it was necessary occasionally to abstain from legitimate actions, such as marital relations or simply sensuous satisfactions. This was what Christ Crucified expected of them. This was what they could learn from the "sweet memory of the Cross of Christ."

Though no reference to any apostolate was made in these letters, Anthony Mary's presence in Guastalla at this particular time spoke volumes. Physically exhausted, as he admitted to the Omodei, Anthony Mary was actually laying down his life for the brethren.

Anthony Mary's untimely death

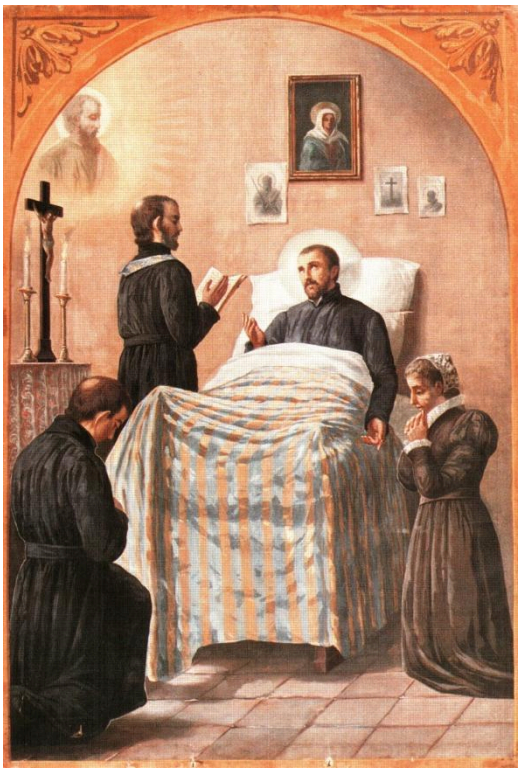
Whether he realized it or not, Anthony Mary's days were numbered. Toward the end of June, he became so ill that he requested to be taken home to Cremona. There, his mother would nurse him back to health, or, if the final hour would come, he would be close to the person he loved the most for she had given him the most.

This return to his maternal home was much more than a convenience or a moving last encounter. There was a superior and profound inner logic, something awesome and archetypal in this final return of a great son to his great mother, of a great Christian son to his great Christian mother. It makes one think of the reunion of Jesus and Mary on Mount Calvary.

Anthony Mary also loved and revered the memory of his father, Lazzaro, whose most premature death had prevented Anthony Mary from knowing his father at all. As we know, Lazzaro had a child out of wedlock, Venturina. She married twice and twice Anthony Mary provided her with a dowry. However, in order to protect the good name of his father, in these transactions Anthony Mary never disclosed his kinship to Venturina.

During his final days Anthony Mary had the good fortune of enjoying the sweet comfort of Christian friendship. From Guastalla to Cremona he was accompanied by one of his cofounders, the gentle Bartolomeo Ferrari, and by Bonsignor Cacciaguerra, a great Christian layman and a great personal friend from Siena. Shortly afterwards, Soresina and Serafino da Fermo arrived from Milan. The 25 year old Soresina was the youngest to join Anthony Mary's society of priests, and his favorite. He had just received one of his last letters. Serafino, it will be recalled, was his close friend from the university days in Padua. If we should believe Fontana dei Conti, also the Angelic Paola Antonia Negri was present.

They used every remedy that art could suggest to preserve a life so precious, but he told them plainly that within the Octave of Sts. Peter and Paul he would be called from this world. He said to his mother who was beside him, sad and weeping, "Do not weep, my sweet mother, because before long" (as really came to pass) "you too will come to enjoy with me that eternal glory - that I hope (I am about) to enjoy."



Then, God sent him a sweet and consoling vision. Anthony Mary saw across the veil of time all that would happen to his Congregation, the severe trials that it would be subjected to, the hard struggles it would have to undergo, but he was consoled by God's promise that his Order will gain much by means of these trials. He related the vision to Fathers Bartolomeo Ferrari and Giambattista Soresina who had come from Milan to stay with him during his illness; then with burning words he exhorted them to love religious discipline, to maintain peace and fraternal charity and ever advance in the love and fear of God. Saint Paul, in the height of the fever, asked him if he wanted to go with him. He answered, "willingly!" It was his last word on July 5, 1539 (Saturday afternoon), at three o'clock in the afternoon, like his Crucified Lord, while the bells of the first vespers of the octave of the Apostles were ringing, as he himself

had foretold. After having received with the greatest fervor the Last Sacraments, he fell to sleep in the Lord. He was 36 year old, had been a priest for eleven years and a religious Founder for nine. His great accomplishments notwithstanding, it was an untimely death.

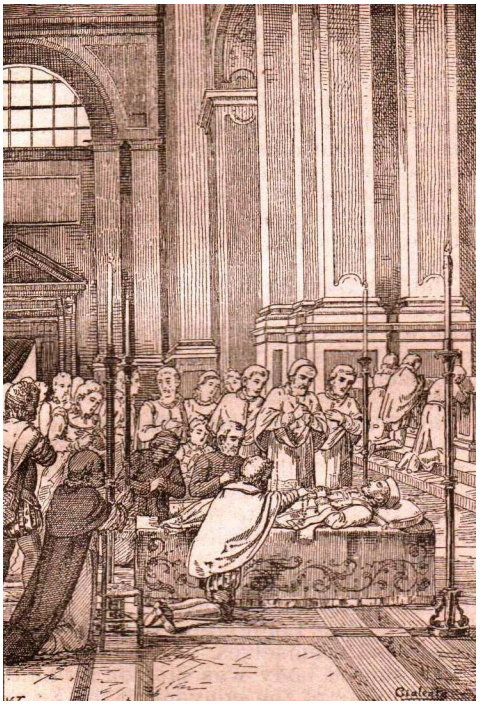
To mention only his society of priests: they were left with unfinished and sketchy constitutions, that is, without a definite rule of life and specific forms of apostolate. Although Anthony Mary initiated the process for the establishment of a definitive motherhouse and church (St. Barnabas), these became a reality only six years later. His priests also lacked a formal name. They were simply called the Sons of St. Paul. Their most familiar name of Barnabites would be given them by the people twenty years later as the Fathers officiated the church of Saint Barnabas. Their official name of Clerics Regular of St. Paul, first used by Pope Julius III in 1550, was to be formalized exactly forty years after Anthony Mary's death by the definitive Constitutions of 1579.

As soon as he expired, Cacciaguerra, who had accompanied him, he himself feverish, exclaimed: "O Cremona, if you only knew who today has left this life! What a great loss!"

Here are the scanty but moving words with which his death was registered in our first chronicles:

> "*On July 5, 1539, our divine and angelic father, sir Anthony M. Zaccaria went to heaven at the ninth hour, while in Cremona in the house of his mother; from there he was brought to Milan in St. Paul the Converted, and that chaste body was buried, in the midst of intense and great sorrow, having we been deprived of such a divine and delightful guide*."

The funeral was solemn and touching. On Sunday, July 26, the body was carried with great pomp to the Parish Church of St. Donato, where it was exposed for two days. It would be impossible to give any estimate as to the number of people who flocked to pay their last tribute to the servant of God. Crowds continually came and went; some reverently kissing his head and hands, others touching him with their beads, handkerchiefs and other objects and some even cutting off small pieces of his vestments to keep them as precious relics. From this arose the necessity of enclosing him quickly in a wooden coffin.



Bishop Luca di Siriate, who had consecrated him as a priest, presided the funeral services, surrounded by all his Chancellors; after these came his spiritual sons followed by a large crowd of citizens to transport the remains to Milan.

This translation was indeed a triumphal procession. Priests and laity came out from the villages and castles where the body was to pass, and forming in procession, went to meet it carrying crosses, bearing lighted candles and singing joyful litanies such as would be done to honor the relics of a saint. In these pious demonstrations, the people of Castiglione Lodigiano distinguished themselves in a special way.

The sacred body was laid on an altar in the choir of the convent of the Angelics in Milan, where it rested for 26 years, remaining, entire and incorrupt. In 1566 an order came from the Holy See that no corpse should be kept on the altars. Anthony Mary was then buried in the crypt of St. Paul's church that served as a burial place also for the Angelics.

The Canonization

The various tribulations suffered by the Barnabites and the Angelics since 1552 did not allow them to gather the necessary proves and evidences about the holiness of the Founder, nor could they seriously consider to officially introduce the cause of canonization, happy with the customary title of Blessed granted by the Church authorities to anyone who had died in the odor of sanctity.

It was only after the promulgation of the Constitutions in 1579 that, as the new generation of Barnabites, eager to know their own history, started to question the old Fathers and to gather the memoirs of the first years, the Barnabites seriously thought of the glorification of Anthony M. Zaccaria, and so started to print holy cards with the title 'Blessed.' But a decree of Urban VIII, in 1624, deprived Anthony Mary Zaccaria of that title. The Barnabites could have asked for a dispensation, instead, mindful of their past sour relationship with the Inquisition, they preferred to obey without questioning, and so, according to the new requirements, they erased from the Founder's images the title Blessed. It will be only on December 7, 1889 that the title will be officially given back to our Holy Founder, and finally, in 1890, Leo XIII integrated his cult. Meantime his body was recovered in the crypt of the St. Paul's church paving the way for the canonization.

On May 27, 1897, Anthony Mary Zaccaria was proclaimed a Saint by Leo XIII, together with Peter Fourier, Founder of the Canon Sisters of Our Lady, with his memory to be celebrated by the whole Church every year of July 5.

Since April 9, 1892, the remains of St. Anthony Mary Zaccaria are venerated in the church of St. Barnabas in Milan.